

TEST PIT EXCAVATION WITHIN CURRENTLY OCCUPIED RURAL SETTLEMENTS – RESULTS OF THE ENGLISH CORS PROJECT IN 2016

By CARENZA LEWIS

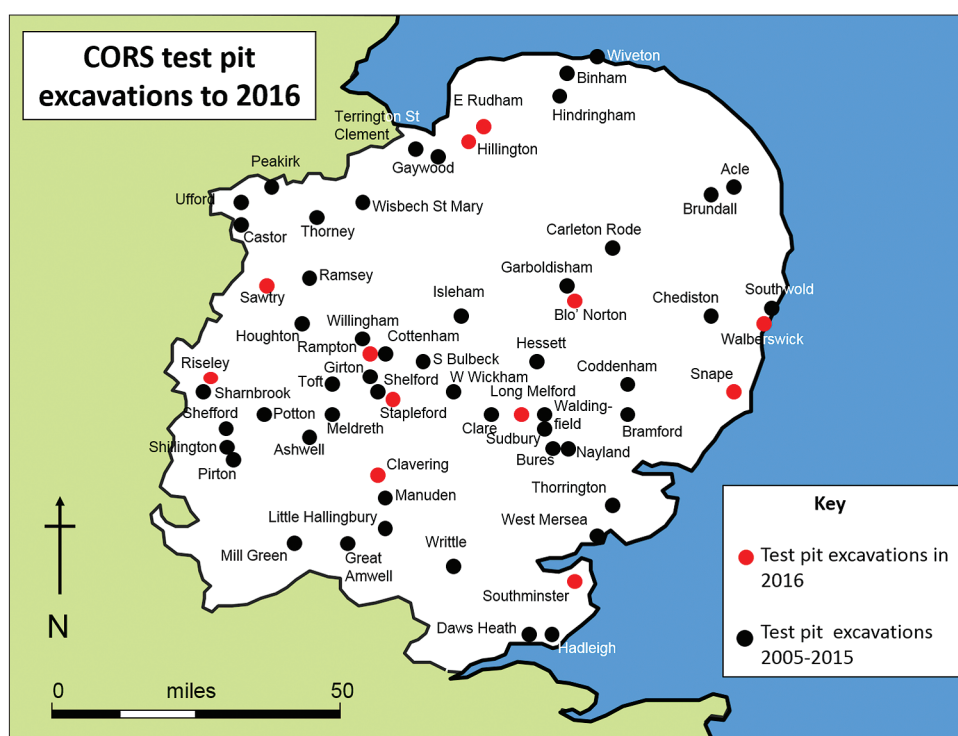


Figure 1 Map of Eastern England showing the locations of the CORS investigated by the HEFA project in East Anglia in 2016. Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

In 2016 a twelfth year of test pit excavation took place within sixteen currently occupied rural settlements (CORS) in southern England, all bar two in eastern England (Fig. 1), with more than 150 test pits excavated in total. Two settlements were new additions to the programme, with work in others building on that previously reported (reports in this journal, 2005–2016).

The aims and methods of the CORS project are outlined elsewhere (Lewis 2007a; 2014a). Pottery reports from each site, along with maps showing the approximate location of test pits, are available on the Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) website. The maps show the distribution of pottery, period by period, from the prehistoric to the modern, for every settlement where test pit excavations have been carried out in association with ACA since 2005. The summaries in this paper can be considered in more depth if read alongside these maps.

Data on pottery finds from the test pits are submitted each year to the Historic Environment Record (HER) for each county and archive reports are prepared for each test pit showing the precise location and detailing finds.

Summaries of the results are published annually in this journal and online. Discussion and conclusions for each settlement are added to create a final archive report when test pit excavation ceases in each settlement. Occasional research papers are published on specific aspects of the results (e.g. Lewis 2010; 2015b; 2016). Sites are discussed below in alphabetical order, listed by county.

Bedfordshire

Riseley, Bedfordshire (NGR TL 042628)

Eleven test pits were excavated in Riseley in 2016, bringing the overall total to 31 (Fig. 2). Three were located south of the church (which is today somewhat isolated at the northern end of Church Lane), in an area where only one test pit had previously been excavated in a location extensively damaged by recent development. As in previous years, no Romano-British pottery was found, and no more sherds dating to the Anglo-Saxon period were found either in 2016. As in 2014 and 2015, pottery of high medieval date was found in pits at the northern and southern ends of the High Street, with fewer pits in the centre where High Street meets Keysoe Road.

¹ University of Lincoln

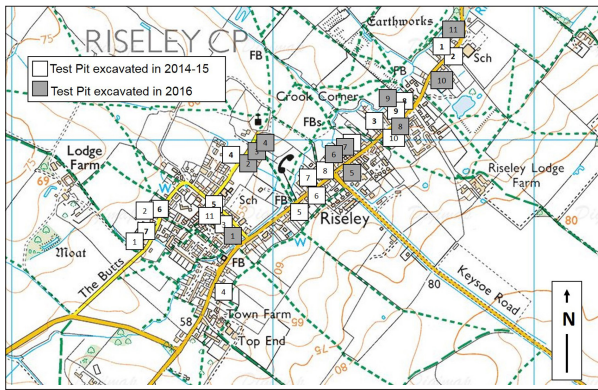


Figure 2 Riseley, Bedfordshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

This seems to reinforce the suggestion made previously, that the High Street comprised two discrete settlements, part of a more dispersed medieval settlement than today, although RIS/16/05 produced more than 30 sherds of this date, perhaps indicating a small area of habitation at the road junction. All of the pits near the church produced pottery of high medieval date, although none in large amounts (RIS/16/02 produced five sherds, the others fewer). This may be due to none of the pits being excavated beyond 0.5m due to time constraints, but it remains possible that area around the church was not one of substantial medieval habitation, in a settlement that appears at least semi-dispersed. As in previous years, nearly all pits produced late medieval pottery, reflecting kiln production nearby. Very little pottery of post-medieval date was found around the church, suggesting that any settlement in this area contracted further at this time.

Cambridgeshire

Rampton, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 542267)

Eleven test pits were excavated in Rampton in 2016, bringing the total to date to 31 (Fig. 3). Four pits produced small amounts of Romano-British pottery, and

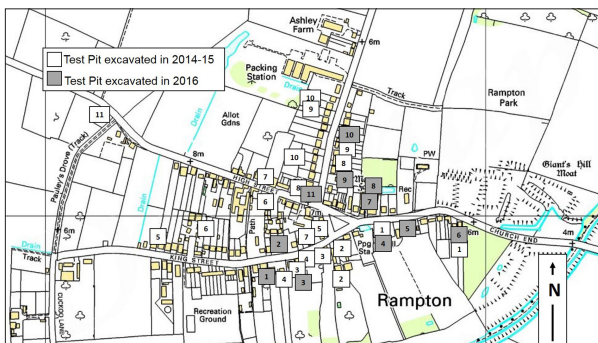


Figure 3 Rampton, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

it is interesting to note that five of the six pits that have over the last three years produced material of this date lie along the north-south orientated line of Cow Lane, with the other near the earthworks east of the present village.

A single 5g sherd of Stamford Ware (RMP/16/09) was the only find of Anglo-Saxon date, reinforcing similar absences from test pit excavations in Rampton in earlier years. Most pits produced pottery dating to the high medieval period, as in previous years, although such material is not found in large quantities with only three of the 31 pits excavated to date yielding more than four sherds. These are all from sites along the High Street.

There is a marked reduction in the number of sites producing pottery in the late medieval period, with only five yielding more than a single sherd, confirming the impression from earlier years of severe post-fourteenth-century contraction in population and settlement, particularly along King Street (south-west of the present green). Post-medieval recovery, when this eventually occurred, appears to have favoured the green, with all the pits producing larger amounts of this date located near to or around this area.

Sawtry, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 167837)

Twelve test pits were excavated in Sawtry in 2016, bringing the total to 36 (Fig. 4). Just two sherds of Romano-British pottery were found, reflecting the previously mooted suggestion that the excavated areas were not utilised for settlement at this time.

Very little additional Anglo-Saxon pottery was recovered. Generally, only relatively small amounts of

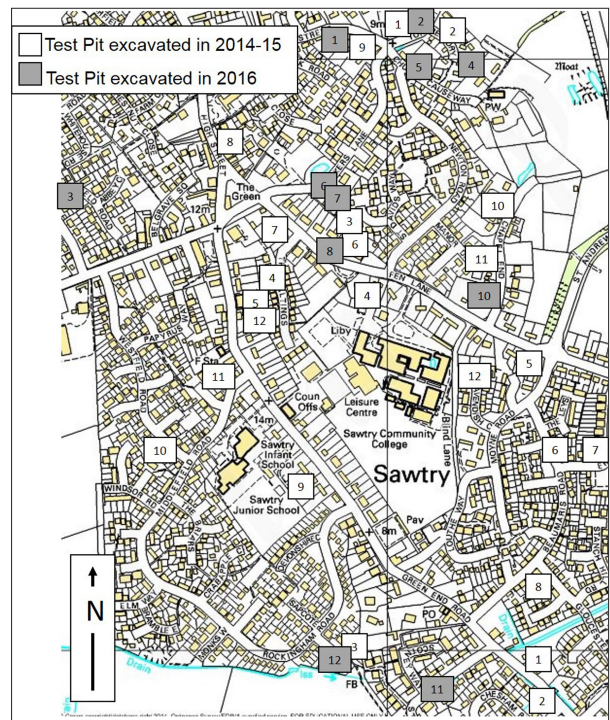


Figure 4 Sawtry, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

medieval pottery were found from any of the pits, with the exceptions of SAW/16/02 (north-west of the parish church) and SAW/16/11, nearly 1km to the south of the church along St Judith's Lane in Green End, which produced more sherds (13) than the rest of the 2016 pits combined. There appear to be at least four nodes of habitation at this time, one north-west of the parish church, a second on Fen Lane (adjacent to a marked dog-leg in the nineteenth-century street, when the area was uninhabited), a third (possibly) along Chapel Lane and the fourth at Green End. Although it is difficult to be confident with such a relatively small number of pits excavated in such a large settlement, it seems likely that Sawtry in the medieval period was mostly (if not entirely) dispersed, possibly as a series of greens and ends. There is evidence for severe post-fourteenth-century contraction, followed by a strong recovery in the post-medieval period, probably stimulated by the settlement's proximity to the Great North Road (now the A1).

Stapleford, Cambridgeshire (NGR TL 473517)

Seven test pits were excavated in Stapleford in 2016 (Fig. 5), bringing the total to 27. Three pits produced pottery of Romano-British date (STA/16/02, 03, 04), a relatively high percentage compared with most pits excavated within CORS to date. All pits producing Romano-British pottery are in the northern side of the present settlement. There is some suggestion of clustering around the site of the later parish church, and it is plausible there is a Romano-British settlement of some sort nearby.

No additional Anglo-Saxon pottery was found in 2016, and only limited amounts of medieval pottery, with material of this date present in pits scattered across the settlement with no apparent concentration, but notably scarce in pits near the church. While there is a noticeable decline in the number of sites producing pottery after the fourteenth century, what is even more striking is the lack of continuity, with sites producing later material generally not the same as those producing pre-fourteenth-century pottery. The most notable example is STA/16/05, c. 250m south of the church

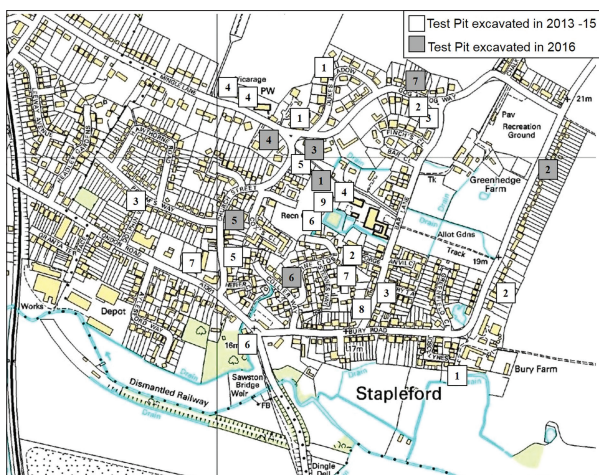


Figure 5 Stapleford, Cambridgeshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

along Church Street, which produced five sherds of late medieval transitional ware but only a single 3g sherd of pre-fourteenth-century pottery. This appears to be a new foundation on land which may previously have been manured arable. In the post-medieval period, habitation appears to have focussed in the northern part of the present settlement, closer to the church, but not particularly tightly clustered around it.

Essex

Clavering, Essex (NGR TL 472319)

Twelve test pits were excavated in Clavering in 2016 (Fig. 6), adding to the 29 dug in 2012 bringing the total to 41. The focus in 2016 was solely on the presently most-nucleated part of the settlement, either sides of High Street and Pelham Road running south of the church and the site of the castle. A single sherd of Bronze Age pottery from the south side of the village is an usual find, but difficult to interpret in isolation, although it appeared to be associated with burnt and worked flint which may be contemporary, hinting at the possibility of domestic or funerary activity nearby.

No Anglo-Saxon pottery was recovered and only a limited amount of pottery of medieval date was found, from any of the pits, with the area closest to the church and castle producing less than sites further away. The pottery distribution overall suggests the settlement was quite attenuated, and it seems likely to have been more dispersed in the medieval period than it is today, although there is some clustering around Middle Street, immediately east of the castle. Only a single pit in 2016 produced pottery of post-fourteenth-century date, suggesting that the demographic upheavals of this period had a substantial impact on the settlement. Post-medieval recovery, however, seems to be strong, both within the village and the outlying sites, and it seems likely that this is the time when the High Street settlement took on its present form.

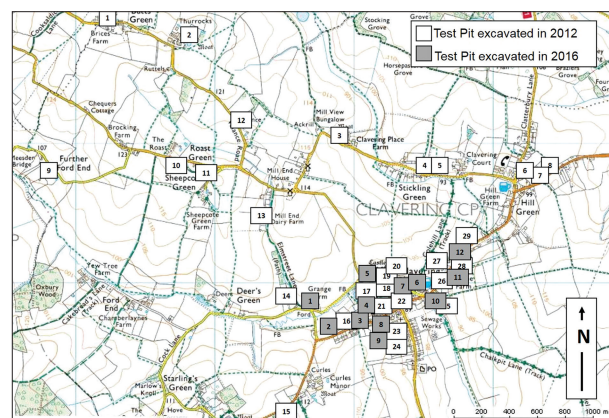


Figure 6 Clavering, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Hadleigh, Essex (NGR TQ 811871)

Seven test pits were dug in Hadleigh in 2016 (Fig. 7), adding to the fifteen excavated last year, to bring the total to 22. Two pits produced pottery of Romano-British date (HAD/16/04, 05). These pits were close together (although not in adjacent plots) along Church Road, c. 150m east of the later church. They lie some 500m from the Roman fortlet to the south-west of the present town, and hint at some sort of discrete focus of activity in the Roman period.

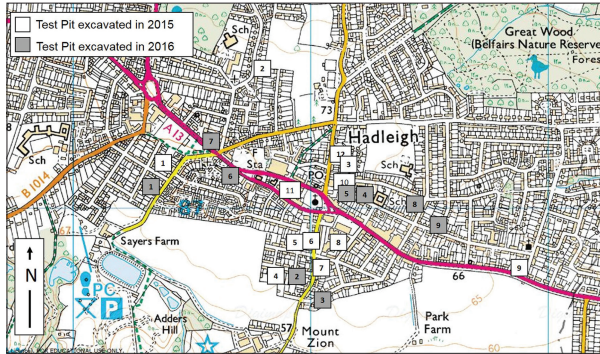


Figure 7 Hadleigh, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

No pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was found, and very little of medieval date. The larger amounts of high medieval pottery came not from the pits nearest the thirteenth- to fourteenth-century castle, but from those near the church and the market place either side of it. There is even less pottery of late medieval date, when sites further away from the church cease to produce pottery almost entirely. This may be due in part at least to the declining use of the castle in the fifteenth century. In the post-medieval period, Hadleigh is one of the few places in eastern England to produce creamware from test pits, indicative of its urban status and its proximity to London and the coast.

Southminster, Essex (NGR TQ 958996)

Nine test pits were excavated in Southminster in 2016 (Fig. 8), adding to the twelve in 2015 bringing the total to 21. Four of the pits were sited along Queenborough Road and North End, an area on the north side of the present settlement not excavated in 2016.

No pottery was found predating the twelfth century and only a couple of sherds of high medieval pottery were found from all nine pits, with just a single sherd in each of two pits. Marginally more post-fourteenth-century pottery was found (five sherds) but these also came from only two sites. It seems likely that the medieval settlement was tightly clustered around the church, with areas to the north and (based on work in 2015) south only used for habitation in the post-medieval period.

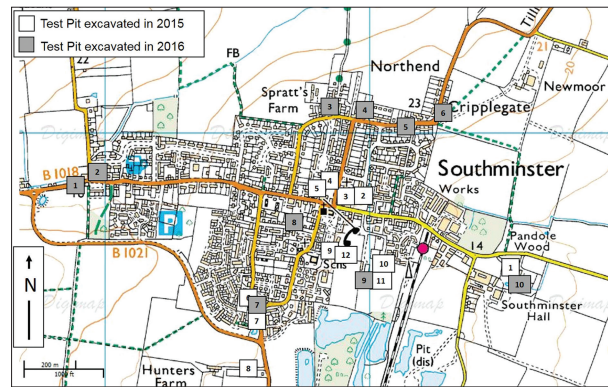


Figure 8 Southminster, Essex, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Hampshire

North Warnborough (NGR SU 731515)

Twelve test pits were excavated in North Warnborough in 2016, bringing the total since 2013 to 45 (Fig. 9). As in previous years, no Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon pottery was found, and limited amounts of medieval pottery, with barely a dozen high medieval sherds (divided between five pits). Only NWA/16/12 produced sufficient to infer habitation in the vicinity with any degree of confidence (seven sherds). However, this served usefully to confirm the southern limit of the most populous part of the medieval settlement at North Warnborough, which seems to appear in or shortly after the twelfth century. At this point it extended as an intensively inhabited settlement along Hook Road and Bridge Road, north of the bridge over the canal. South of this point the settlement appears to be more loosely nucleated with most pits producing smaller amounts of pottery. As noted before, North Warborough appears

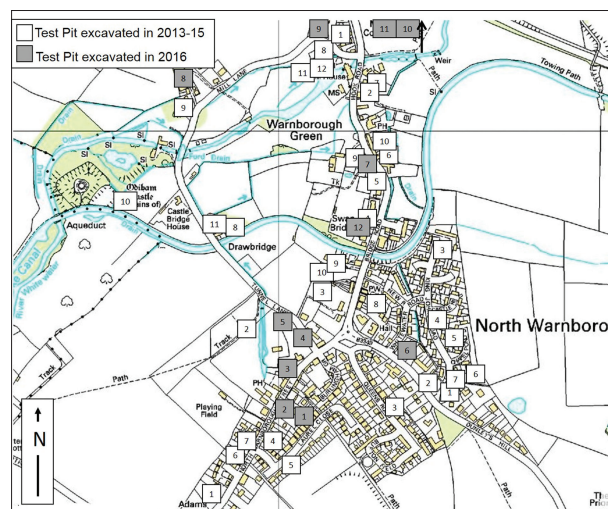


Figure 9 North Warnborough, Hampshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

to be particularly badly impacted by the fourteenth-century demographic crisis, with this likely to have been exacerbated by the declining fortunes of the nearby castle at Odiham.

Lincolnshire

Bardney, Lincolnshire (NGR TF 119695)

Nine test pits were excavated in Bardney in 2016 (Fig. 10), bringing the total since 2015 to nineteen. Two pits (BAR/16/04, 08) each produced a single very small sherd of Stamford Ware. These post-date the documented destruction of the seventh-century abbey in 870, and are not really sufficient to infer settlement in the vicinity, but may derive from settlement or agricultural activity in or around the village.

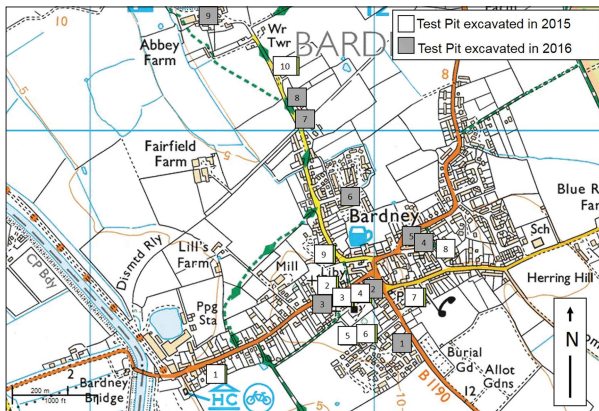


Figure 10 Bardney, Lincolnshire, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Only BAR/16/05 produced more than a couple of sherds of high medieval pottery, and there was, as in 2015, no evidence for any post-fourteenth-century decline. In the post-medieval period, the settlement is notable for imported Frechen Stoneware found in two pits.

Norfolk

Blo' Norton, Norfolk (NGR TL 016797)

Six test pits were excavated in Blo' Norton in 2016, (Fig. 11), bringing the total since 2015 to fourteen. Four of these were sites along Fen Road, in an area not previously excavated in the south of this highly dispersed parish. Little pre-modern pottery was found overall, with the most significant discovery being nine sherds of Romano-British wares from BNO/16/03, adjacent to a nineteenth-century cottage along Fen Road. These sherds came from undisturbed deposits 0.6m below the present ground surface, and suggest there is likely to be intensive activity in the vicinity, most likely relating to settlement, in the Roman period.

A single 9g sherd of Thetford Ware from BNO/16/04 represents the first find of Anglo-Saxon pottery from test

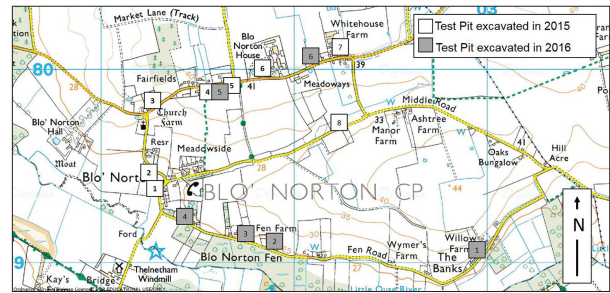


Figure 11 Blo' Norton, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

pitting in Blo' Norton, separated by more than 300m from the Roman site and lying more than 500m from the present parish church. This may relate to settlement in the vicinity, but is insufficient to infer this with any confidence.

No significant finds of high medieval pottery were found in 2016, leaving just two attested settlement nodes of this date in the parish, separated by c. 650m (and by nearly 900m if a route is followed via the present lanes). It is interesting to note that neither of these nodes are close to the test pits which yielded either Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon material, although that south of the church (near the junction between Church Lane, Thelneham Road and Middle Road) does occupy a similar position in the landscape, at c. 25m OD 150–200m north of the Little Ouse River.

This site appears to have gone out of intensive use in the later medieval period, when BNO/16/02, c. 250m from the Roman site along Fen Road, produced two sherds, tentatively suggesting it may have come into more intensive use, possibly as settlement, at this time. Overall there is no evidence for post-fourteenth-century decline, but subsequently the post-medieval period saw a marked increase in activity, with nearly all pits excavated in 2015 and 2016 producing probably habitative volumes of pottery of this date.

Brundall, Norfolk (NGR TG 325084)

Eleven test pits were excavated in Brundall in 2016 (Fig. 12), bringing the total to 32, with a particular focus on the eastern end of the present settlement, north of

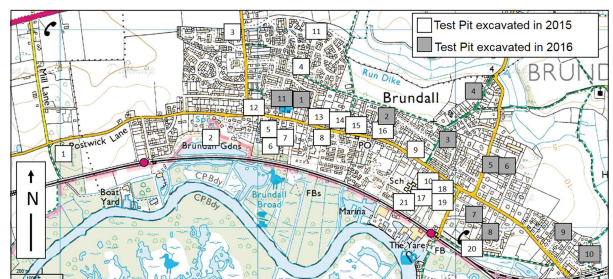


Figure 12 Brundall, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Strumpshaw Road. As in 2015, only modest amounts of medieval pottery were recovered from the test pits: just three small sherds of early medieval sandy ware and one of late medieval transitional ware. This suggests that the area was mostly in non-intensive use such as for arable, bar two nodes of probable high medieval habitation separated by *c.* 500m. The post-medieval period appears to be when the present settlement developed, with its location on the River Yare close to the eastern coast, and near Norwich and Great Yarmouth. This is reflected in the presence of imported eighteenth-century imported Delft Ware and Stonewares, although the eastern end of the present settlement yields less material of this date and appears to have remained on the margin of the settlement until the nineteenth or twentieth century.

East Rudham, Norfolk (NGR)

East Rudham is located *c.* 20 miles north-east of Kings Lynn and is today a small settlement divided into two hamlets. The easternmost is a small double row along Broomsthorpe Road with a back lane where housing is also present close to the River Tat which runs through the settlement. To the north, housing is mostly arranged around a small rectangular green, on the north side of which lies the parish church adjacent to Manor House. This area of habitation today extends continuously west to join up with West Rudham, which is itself characterised by attenuated settlement extending for more than 1km north and south of an irregular common, with settlement on the north of the common continuing west into The Green. St Peters Church in West Rudham lies isolated, adjacent only to Manor Farm, some 350m south of the common-edge settlement. The settlement pattern in the tenth century was little different to today, although the elements were more discretely separate.

Nine test pits were excavated at East Rudham in 2016 (Fig. 13), eight of which were in the western end of the Broomsthorpe Road/Back Lane hamlet. Such a small number of pits inevitably provide only a limited view of the settlement's development. However, it is notable that the two southernmost pits (ERU/16/01 and 02), some 300m southeast of the parish church, yielded Late Anglo Saxon Thetford Ware, suggesting settlement in the vicinity and possibly the survival of undisturbed deposits with no modern material. Seven of the test pits produced

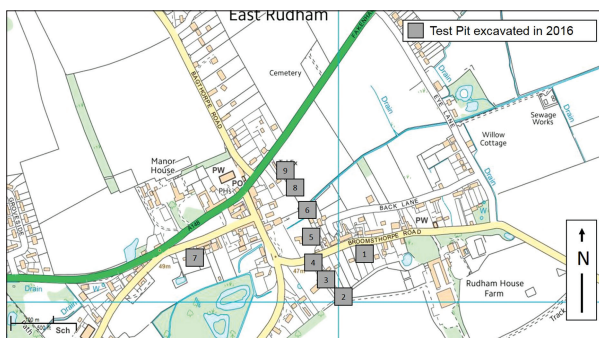


Figure 13 East Rudham, Norfolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

high medieval pottery, but in only four was there more than a single sherd and it is possible there was a gap between one area of settlement south of Broomsthorpe Road and a second north of the River Tat, at the east end of the green-edge settlement. Hardly any late medieval pottery was recovered, with the only sherd possibly of this date a single sherd of Cistercian Ware (1475–1700) found in ERU/16/04, south of Broomsthorpe Road. Post-medieval recovery appears to have focused on the area either side of Broomsthorpe Road.

Hillington, Norfolk (NGR TF 722 254)

Nine test pits were excavated in Hillington in 2016 (Fig. 14), bringing the total to eighteen; as in 2015 these focused on the area either side of Station Road, leading to the parish church. East of the church, HIL/16/02 yielded no less than eleven sherds of Bronze Age pottery, with eight of these coming from more than 0.5m from the present ground surface and strongly hinting at undisturbed deposits of this date in this area. This pit lies close to those which produced pottery of the same date in 2015, and suggest an extensive area of Bronze Age activity extending either side of the later church which may relate to settlement or funerary activity, or possibly both. HIL/16/02 also yielded late Anglo-Saxon pottery, as did five others, all bar one in quantities likely to indicate settlement nearby. Material of this date seems to cluster in two discrete areas, one around the church separated by perhaps 100m from the second, which lies closer to the present main road through the village: here ERU/16/07 and 08 (immediately south of the main road) both produced more than ten sherds of Thetford Ware.

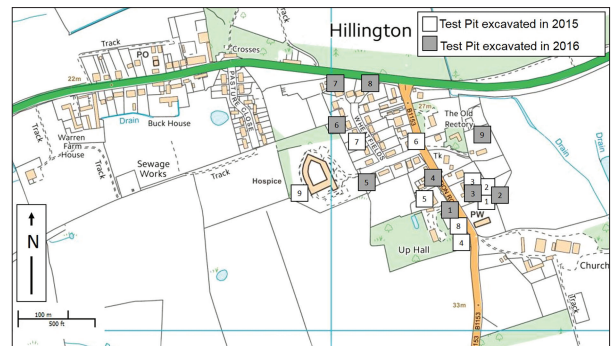


Figure 14 Hillington, Norfolk showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

The settlement pattern in the high medieval period appears to be very similar to that in the late Anglo-Saxon period. In contrast, only two pits produced late medieval pottery, none more than a single sherd. These two sherds are the first finds of material of this date from test pits in Hillington, and confirm that a pattern of severe post-fourteenth-century contraction, with no evidence to suggest that this part of the settlement was not entirely deserted at this time. Slightly more post-medieval pottery was found, indicating tentative recovery when the settlement seems to revert to the

previous pattern of two nodes, around the church and along the main road.

Suffolk

Long Melford, Suffolk (NGR TL 865455)

Five test pits were excavated in Long Melford in 2016 (Fig. 15), bringing the total to 74 and focusing on the north of the present settlement, around the Green and along Westgate Street. The tendency of late Anglo-Saxon settlement to cluster around and on the green, noted in previous years, was reinforced by three sherds of Thetford Ware from LME/01/05, west of the green. There was no indication from this pit that activity in this area continued into the high medieval period. Pottery of this date was in fact notable by its absence in 2016 (just a single sherd from LME/16/01), in stark contrast to that of late medieval date, which was found in all pits. A gap at this time between an area of settlement along Westgate Road and another to the south along the High Street remains clearly evident.

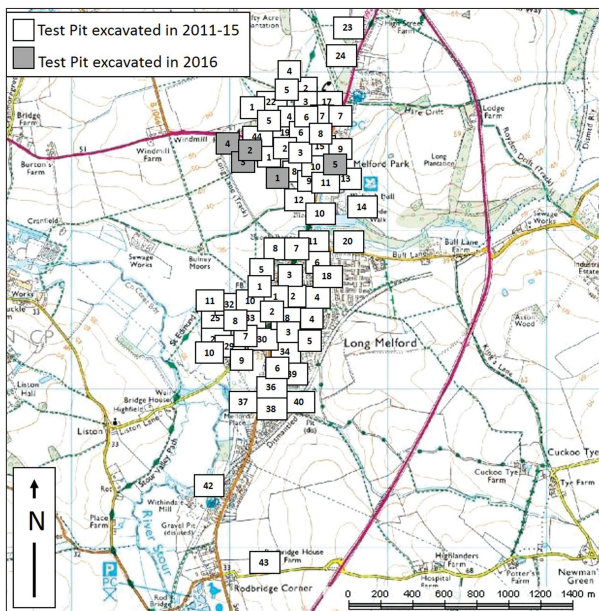


Figure 15 Long Melford, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Snape, Suffolk (NGR TM 394586)

Snape is located c. 26km northeast of Ipswich, north of the River Alde at between 2 and 18m OD. The settlement today comprises three discrete elements. The southernmost is The Street, which clusters around a point where four roads meet on low-lying land c. 500m north of the river and then runs north for c. 500m along Church Road. The Street is separated by c. 500m from a second area of settlement at Snape around Church Common. The parish church is located on the north side of this common adjacent to Church Farm. The third area of settlement is Gromford, which lies 1km north-west of The Street and c. 500m west of Church Common.

Settlement in the nineteenth century was more limited in extent, with that at Snape Street mostly restricted to the cluster around the road junction, and that around the common limited to six farms or short cottage terraces. Church Common itself was then very much larger, nearly 1km in length compared to its modern extent of just 250m. Gromford comprised just eight farms or cottage terraces arranged as an 800m long interrupted row running towards another large area of common.

Fifteen test pits were excavated in 2016 in the Snape hamlets (Fig. 16): eight in Snape Street, three in Gromford, two in the river valley and one on the nineteenth-century common east of Church Common, 700m east of the parish church and near the site of a ship burial and associated cemetery of the fifth to seventh centuries AD (Filmer-Sankey and Pestell 2001). A single sherd of Romano-British pottery from a site near the river was the only find of this date from any of the 2016 test pits in Snape parish. No pottery of Anglo-Saxon date was found from any of the pits, in spite of the nearby cemetery and some fifth- to eighth-century settlement remains, excavated in advance of development east of Church Road (Lichtenstein 2013). This absence is noteworthy given the importance of the cemetery remains, but it does reflect findings from field walking in 2014, which suggested the Anglo-Saxon settlement did not extend far beyond the excavated area (Lewis and Ranson 2014).

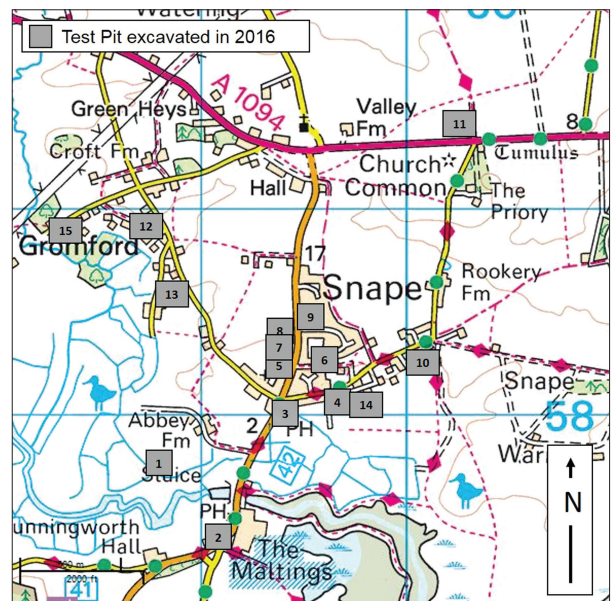


Figure 16 Snape, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Six pits produced pottery of high medieval date, four from The Street, one from Gromford (SNA/16/13) and the other close to the river. Some 50% of the pits from The Street thus produced pottery of this date, broadly in line with regional averages, although with relatively small numbers of pits excavated it is difficult to judge the significance of this. The Street area seems to see some marked late medieval decline, with only one pit

producing more than a single sherd of this date. This test pit did however produce notably more late medieval pottery (four sherds) than previously. The site south of Gromford produced five sherds of late medieval pottery, and although this was somewhat less than earlier (sixteen sherds), it probably represents continuity of occupation.

Walberswick, Suffolk (NGR TM 490747)

Twelve test pits were excavated at Walberswick in 2016 (Fig. 17), bringing the total to 42. Six were targeting the area in the middle of the present settlement where little test pit excavation had previously been carried out. A single sherd of Romano-British pottery (WAL/16/05) added to the existing impression of some sort of relatively unintensified use of the area south of the later church.

WAL/16/10 produced two shreds of Thetford Ware, hinting at the possibility of another node of dispersed settlement to add to the three already tentatively identified. As in previous years, nearly all pits bar those around the church produced high medieval pottery, and new pits in the centre of the settlement showed this is likely to have extended continuously along The Street at this time. In the late medieval period, the settlement appears to have shifted west, away from the coast and towards the church.

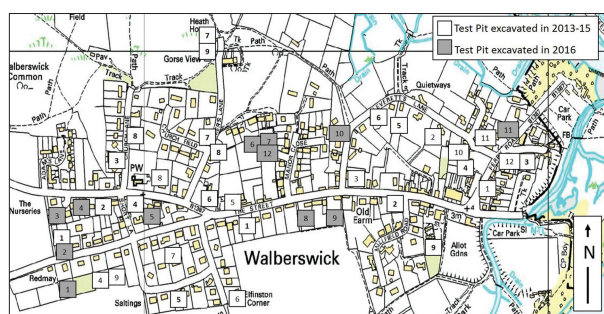


Figure 17 Walberswick, Suffolk, showing approximate locations of excavated test pits (© Edina Digimap). Figure prepared by Catherine Collins and Carenza Lewis.

Conclusion

By the end of 2016, the total number of test pits excavated exceeded 2,200. Archive reports have been prepared for each test pit excavated in each settlement and are held by ACA at the University of Cambridge. Details of the 2016 test pit sites and earlier reports are available to view at www.access.arch.cam.ac.uk/reports.

Test pit excavation in CORS in the eastern region will continue in 2017 as a joint programme between the University of Cambridge and the University of Lincoln, with academic director Carenza Lewis based at the University of Lincoln and fieldwork from Cambridge managed by Alison Dickens. The results of test pit excavations in 2017 will be reported in the next volume of *Medieval Settlement Research*.

Acknowledgements

The test pit excavations reported here were funded by the University of Cambridge, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and the University of Lincoln: thanks are given for this support that advances knowledge while also allowing so many people to benefit from involvement in archaeological excavation. In a project such as this, the number of individuals involved runs well into the hundreds, whom space cannot allow to be named individually here. Thanks are therefore given here anonymously and collectively to the members of the public and the school pupils and teachers who carried out the test pit excavations in 2016, to the owners of all the sites where test pits were dug in 2016 and to the local coordinators in each settlement who helped arrange access to sites for excavation. Thanks are also due to many other university staff and students who helped with the 2016 excavations for their valuable support.

The archaeological supervisor for the test pit excavations was Catherine Ranson, the programme manager was Alison Dickens and programme administrators in 2016 were Laura James and Emily Riley. Emma Jubbs and Abi Paine provided support from the University of Lincoln. Paul Blinkhorn, John Newman and Alex Beeby provided help with on-site pottery spot-identification and the pottery reports were prepared by Paul Blinkhorn.

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